

EXHIBIT

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News Release

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MONTANA POWER BECOMES NORTHWESTERN ENERGY

Butte, Mont. – March 12, 2002 – Effective today, Montana Power customers will come to know their electricity and natural gas provider as NorthWestern Energy, signifying the joining of NorthWestern Corporation's (NYSE:NOR) energy delivery businesses in Montana, South Dakota and Nebraska.

"The NorthWestern Energy name marks a new beginning for our team members and our energy customers. The new name reflects a blending of NorthWestern's and Montana Power's strengths and long history of delivering reliable, competitively priced energy with superior customer services," said Merle Lewis, chairman and chief executive officer of NorthWestern Corporation. "We bring a new commitment to Montana's energy future and the economic growth of the state."

NorthWestern Energy provides electricity and natural gas and energy-related services to more than 590,000 customers in Montana, South Dakota and Nebraska. The company has one of the largest energy delivery platforms in the northern tier states with a combined electric system that includes 26,000 miles of transmission and distribution lines and associated facilities covering two-thirds of Montana and eastern South Dakota. The company's natural gas service system includes more than 7,500 miles of pipelines and storage facilities in Montana, South Dakota and central Nebraska.

"In addition to a strong infrastructure, our 1,500 dedicated NorthWestern Energy team members will continue to build on our record for providing award-winning reliability and excellent customer service," said Richard Hylland, president and chief operating officer of NorthWestern Corporation. "Our mission is to continue to grow NorthWestern Energy as a full-service, customer-driven energy provider that will be a strong player in the competitive energy industry of the future."

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The new name and logo were unveiled to team members in a celebration this morning in the company's general office building in Butte as well as company locations throughout Montana, South Dakota and Nebraska. Mike Hanson, NorthWestern Energy chief executive officer, said that Montana customers will see the new NorthWestern Energy name and logo in an advertising campaign that begins this week throughout Montana. In addition, customers can find more information on NorthWestern Energy and its Montana operations by going to the company's Web site at www.northwesternenergy.com.

"Changing to a new name and logo will be seamless for our customers," Hanson said. "Customer service telephone numbers, bill payment programs and procedures will remain the same. What we do hope our customers will see is the energetic spirit of our team members as they work every day to provide the standard of service they expect."

NorthWestern Energy is the energy delivery business of NorthWestern Corporation, a FORTUNE 500 company that is a leading provider of energy and communications services and solutions to more than 2.5 million customers across America. Further information about NorthWestern is available on the Internet at www.northwestern.com.

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